TL1445-2

Submission to the UN Sub-Commission on
Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities
under Item 6, August 1989
on Behalf of the Anti-Slavery Society

# Ten Days in East Timor

Mr Chairman and members of the Sub-Commission,

When we heard that Indonesia had opened up East Timor, a colleague and I decided to make a visit. Knowing that your Sub-Commission needs up-to-date information about the situation in East Timor, I have come here to report some impressions of East Timor from our visit from 1st till 11th May 1989.

Mr Chairman,

I want to stress at the start that what we saw was a country at war and a nation still living under foreign occupation.

1. We arrived at Dili airport where we had to report to an immigration officer. This was totally different from other parts of Indonesia. For the first time, we were asked: "Where are you staying and what are your plans?" This question was to recur daily during our stay in East Timor. At our hotel we had frequent visits by men from the immigration office and the tourist bureau and one night our fellow guests at the hotel had a visit from a man who said he worked for 'Sospol'. In a friendly but scheming way, he took care of the other guests, inviting them for a meal, guiding them and buying them bus tickets.

2. Our first impressions seemed to confirm the picture painted by the authorities. We had been told that East Timor was now

peaceful, safe and developing. In Dili, we saw new buildings, a modern sports arena and well-kept streets. But we also found a different Dili where people lived in poverty, in huts and shacks on the other side of a dried-up river. We talked with people there and also with students from the San Jose School. We asked about the situation: was the war still going on, was there any resistance and what they thought about integration. Our questions were met with both sympathy and fear. The answer often was: 'I understand why you are asking but I can't say anything.' The same thing happened on the bus to Baucau. Our fellow passengers didn't dare speak to us until they had made sure that the people sitting next to them were not a policemen.

3. After getting on the bus for Baucau, all identity cards were collected by the conductor, who also asked to see our passports. Between Dili and Baucau, the bus stopped three times for security checks. The identity cards were shown to the security posts, one outside Dili, one in Manatutu and one at a third place. Just before Baucau, we saw that a bus ahead of us had been stopped by the military and we saw a Timorese soldier being taken away by Indonesian soldiers. According to our fellow passengers, this was nothing unusual. Because the soldier had long, fuzzy hair and a beard, it was likely that they suspected him of belonging to the guerrillas despite his Indonesian uniform.

4. As we were approaching Baucau, the military presence grew more and more apparent, in contrast to Dili where hardly any soldiers were seen. In Laleia, we saw heavily armed soldiers repairing a bridge; two were working while four others kept

watch. Between Vemasse and Baucau, a huge bridge had been demolished. According to our fellow passengers, it had been blown up only three years ago. At Baucau airport we saw armoured cars, helicopters and groups of heavily-armed soldiers in combat uniform. Baucau looked like a city at war. Groups of Timorese soldiers (hansips) stood waiting at the old Portuguese Mercado. Trucks full of soldiers were driving up and down the streets.

We stayed one night at Hotel Flamboyant which was being restored by troops. Two rooms were let to tourists. When we registered, we noticed that an official from the Swedish Embassy stayed there for ten days in April. Close to the hotel was a military hospital. Our sources in Baucau told us that it was full up and that wounded soldiers were brought there all the time. In the evening we noticed continous troop movements and the city was blacked out twice due to power failure.

Next day, we went to Viqueque by bus. There were more security checks in Venilale and Ossu. In Viqueque, our arrival caused feverish activity from the local police. There different representatives offered us accommodation. We politely declined and explained that, as Christian, we preferred to stay at the church if possible. This was accepted and the local police chief introduced us to the Catholic priest who bade us welcome.

During the three days we spent in Viqueque, we came across a number of people, Timorese and Indonesians, civilians and military. The local chief of police told us there was no fighting going on any more. When asked about the massive military presence, he said the troops were needed to develop the province.

In the evenings, however, we heard grenade-shelling from the surrounding hills and in the mornings we saw trucks returning full of soldiers who were covered in mud.

Our visit coincided with the Muslim holiday of Idul Fitri but we saw soldiers buying up large quantities of liquor in a Chinese shop. Viqueque was honoured by a visit from the Indonesian armed forces commander who arrived by helicopter. Schoolchildren had been mobilised to greet him but there were very few adults and they didn't seem to share the excitement of the children.

We have taken many photos of the military presence in Baucau and Viqueque which we would like to show to members of the Sub-Commission.

5. Our impression of East Timor as a country at war was confirmed by a number of people we met. Contrary to what is officially claimed by the Indonesian military, Fretilin is still operating. We learned that Fretilin mounted attacks in the Viqueque region, in the village of Oaimur, in December 1988, January 1989 amd February 1989.

6. During our visit we also receive reports about violations of human rights by different military units.

a. On 31 October 1988, two Timorese men were murdered in the village of Ahik, near Lakluta by Indonesian soldiers of Battalion 726. Carlos Mendes da Silva and Luis da Cruz were shot while on duty at a guard post north of Ahik. When other Timorese on guard inpected the bodies of the victims, they were attacked by these soldiers. Seven Timorese were kicked and beaten and five of them

had to seek medical help. On 4 November, they were interrogated by Battalion 726. After being subjected to threats, one of them blamed the Fretilin. One witness of the killings was subjected to violence from Battalion 726. We have the names of all the nine victims and of fifteen witnesses.

b. On 28 October 1988 at 21.00, three civilians were attacked by a soldier from Battalion 726 in the village of Laline, Lakluta. The victims were Jose Ximenes and his wife, and Rita Soares.

c. In March 1989, an unknown number of civilians were killed by Indonesian troops by a unit of Timorese called Team Makitit (Hawk Team). in the village of Bibileo, between Viqueque and Lakluta.

d. During May 1988 in Viqueque, troops went from house to house searching for medicine. Wherever any medicine was found, the persons possessing it were arrested and taken to Kodim military headquarters, interrogated and accused of giving medicine to the guerrillas. Now, nurses in the villages dare not distribute any medicine to people as they fear they will be arrested. One person in Viqueque, Bas Pinto, was arrested on 7 January this year and held for one month because he was suspected of giving medicine to Fretilin.

e. We also heard about the arrest of between 500 and 1,000 people in all of East Timor, beginning 24 October 1988. They were members of a Catholic organisation, Yayasan Santo Antonio. 60 persons were arrested in Viqueque.

f. In September 1988, two members of the local assembly (DPR-D) in Viqueque were arrested and accused of holding subversive

meetings in their homes. They were Inacio, first vice-chairman, and Tomas, second vice-chairman of the DPR-D. They were summoned to the Kodim military command and interrogated by the intelligence under threat of violence. A third member of the assembly, Antonio Vicente, was maltreated by Kodim because he wrote a letter to the Governor criticising the local government and the chairman of the assembly. Obviously, his letter had been intercepted. Following this, people from the Koopskam military command in Dili arrived in Viqueque to interrogate him.

As these examples show, killings, assaults and arrested are an integral part of everyday life in East Timor. Together with our own direct impressions, they show a country at war and a nation still living under foreign occupation.

Thank you.

JAN-ERIC FORSBERG